

Written for the ADVOCATE.

The History of Indian Tribes in the Twin Territories.

III. CHEROKEE INDIANS.

"The mountaineers of aboriginal America were the Cherokees, who occupied the upper valley of the Tennessee River as far west as Muscle Shoals, and the highlands of Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama,—most picturesque and most salubrious region east of the Mississippi. Their homes were encircled by blue hills rising beyond hills, of which the lofty peaks would kindle with the early light, and the overshadowing ridges envelope the valleys like a mass of clouds. There the rocky cliffs, rising in naked grandeur, defy the lightning and mock the loudest peals of the thunder-storm; there the gentler slopes are covered with magnolias and flowering forest trees, decorated with roving climbers, and ring with the perpetual note of the whip-poor-will; there the wholesome water gushes profusely from the earth in transparent springs; snow-white cascades glitter on the hill-sides; and the rivers, shallow but pleasant to the eye, rush through the narrow vales, which the abundant strawberry crimsons, and coppices of rhododendron and flaming azalea adorn. Through this lovely region were scattered the villages of the Cherokees, nearly fifty in number, each consisting of but a few cabins, erected where the bend in the mountain stream offered at once a defence and a strip of alluvial soil for culture. Their towns were always by the side of some creek or river, and they loved their native land; above all, they loved its rivers, the Keowee, the Tugeloo, the Flint, and the beautiful branches of the Tennessee."

Originally emigrating from the northwest this nation took possession of the country which Mr. Bancroft has so beautifully described above, driving before them a moon-eyed race that could

not see by day. So speaks tradition. It will, perhaps, be interesting to the reader to know how the Cherokees preserved and communicated their traditions. It was by means of wampum formed of long strings of beads which were made of clay (white clay being most commonly used), and so arranged as to bear a distinct resemblance to the objects intended to be delineated. The belts were chiefly devoted to the preservation of addresses, the proceedings of councils and assemblies, and the formation of treaties. An officer was chosen to repeat from time to time the speeches and narratives connected with those belts, to impress them fully upon his memory and transmit them to his successors. At a certain time each year they were taken from their places of deposit, and exposed to the whole tribe, while the history of each was publicly recited. In later years the beads were discontinued, but still the traditions were handed down by some old man appointed for the purpose. In each assembly of the nation he was expected to rehearse the story of their early history and subsequent achievements. This he did in a set speech, continuing his discourse although the company might be dancing, or however inattentive. Many of those traditions were early forgotten. (Foster). As the Cherokees settled down, they divided into seven* clans or families, residing some on one side of Smoky Mountain, Ten-

*Seven has always been a mystic number among the Cherokees. When an Indian would fall sick, the conjurer (medicine man) was called to his assistance. The conjurer would order seven of the best hunters to kill seven deer, while he, in the meantime, fasted in the woods, collecting herbs, etc. When the deer had been killed he assembled all the friends of the patient in the sick chamber and commenced to boil the meat and roots in a large pot placed in the center of the room. As the process of making the medicine went on the conjurer would order all the women to dance seven times around the vessel; the warriors joined in and continued until day-break when all partook of the magical potion. Then the conjurer dismissed all the guests, save seven who were to watch the medicine during as many days. The guests would take home with them enough of the liquid to serve them as a wash for the same period. His duty over, the conjurer received his fees and departed.